10/27/71

Dear Gary,

Ned phoned me last night with what pretty clearly is, regardless of how guised or how explained to himself, a withdrawal of his offer. It would have been a considerable disappointment at any time but with what it just followed and at the end of a day that was about an hour and a half short of 24 of work, it came particularly hard. Our conversation finished just before the Tito broadcast. I d stayed up only to catch Cronkite's interview with him, but I could pay attention to little of it.

Exactly what is bugging him I don't really understand, but it seems to have to do with an immaturity partly attributed to you, assessment of blame more than I have. To me, this means more than can be done responsibly. Not only now but for the forseeable future. More, as I understand or misunderstand it, the end, if achieved, would be counterproductive in, at the very least, distorting focus.

However, the purpose of his hasty note when I feel I can take the time better than I'll be able to after Ned has been here for a day and I am that much further behind in other and very pressing things, is to give you two cautions, or, to put it another way, to ask you to examine two things you have done recently that I think you should not have. You do not do things in ex vacuum and these two things affected others.

In this case, you have not yet received and read your copy of the last part of the book, so you were making a recommendation about something of which you know nothing. How could you without understanding that or at least having given it a hasty reading?

When only because we had this joint project I sent Ned a copy of my letter to Cyril, he consulted you, you recommended that he consult Sylvia, which he did. What basis did you have for considering that Sylvia could give him answers? As it happened, she couldn't, for she doesn't understand what is involved yet. In my long subsequent conversation with her I avoided prejudicing her and asked her to think independently. I have not heard from her and I have not written her. But I have several independent assessments of my own political judgement: my Senator's was immediate and prompt, and that os his administrative assistant exactly coincided. Sylvia is, without doubt, brilliant and incorruptible. But hse is not omnistient and she is, tragedially for all of us, given her enormous gifts, latched to the past and her won and I regret to say unchanged concepts. If this is neither criticism nor adverse comment on her, and it is not and is not intended as either, for my respect for her is great, it is fact. Now properly, if you had doubts, don't you think you should have begun with me? Or if Ned didn't see this on his own, don't you think you should have suggested that to him? The net result was to accomplish nothing but the waste of time for two people who have none to waste, SM and me, to trouble us both, to waste some for Ned and perhaps confuse him, and to waste money we either do not have or can put to better purposes. I am with this suggesting that it is time for you to reassess your understand, to try and understand the condition of your knowledge as of the state of our collective knowledge today before you do or recommend things on which others will act and by which still others will be involved. The uncongenial role of our fireman, which has been mine simply because nobody else could or would fill it, has been the single most costly and most destructive thing I've had to cope with. If others haven't grasped what should have been obvious, the least I think I should expect from those like you who have understood this in the past is no needless added burden. There is not, never was, any doubt of the possibility of the hazard I see. This is not to say that it is inevitable. Anyoe who needs a picture drawn is a political infant. The sole question is of probability, and that is one that can't be risked by serious people, for there are no odds long enough to justify the risk when the only possible gain is in public relations. Gotta quit. One last word. We have lived with so many futilities, I'd prefer not to have hopes raised as with this Ned project if they are later to be dashed, with or without the considerable rush work required, but conditions later to be imposed. We are too old, too tired, to overloaded for more of this. Intent is not relevant, only result. Best regards,